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Secretary Harvey: Soldiers, family members top priority

By Sgt. 1st Class Tammy M. Jarrett

Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey addresses troops and audience members during a speech at Fort Myer, Va., Nov. 29, 2004.
Staff Sgt. Carmen L. Burgess

WASHINGTON (Army News Service Jan. 3, 2005) - With less than six weeks on the job, the secretary of the Army said providing for the well-being of Soldiers and their families is his most important priority as the Army's top official.

Dr. Francis J. Harvey shared his seven priorities that will serve as the framework for all his responsibilities as 19th secretary of the Army during an interview Dec. 16.

"As the chief [Gen. Peter Schoomaker, Army Chief of Staff] likes to say, the Soldiers are the centerpiece of our formations so nothing can be more important than a Soldier; nothing can be more important than the family," Harvey said. "I will put a lot of focus on their well-being throughout my tenure."

Harvey said providing the best quality of life for Soldiers and their families is very important and he fully supports the two major quality-of-life initiatives-the residential communities initiative and the barracks modernization program-which are closing the gap on inadequate housing for service members.

The RCI program involves privatizing about 85,000 family housing units on 45 Army installations and the BMP involves providing new or upgraded barracks with more space, privacy and furnishing for single Soldiers Armywide.

"They deserve it," Harvey said. "They should live just like the rest of America lives, because they're defending our country. So I am focused and committed to doing that-that's where the rubber meets the road in terms of that priority."

The secretary's second priority is providing the land forces to win the Global War on Terrorism. He said this includes recruiting and retention in which the Army has met its goal for the past five years.

"That's a nice record we should be proud of, but that's just a record," he said. "We have to look to forward, and we have to have the same performance in the future." The Army also must place more emphasis on training and readiness to ensure deployed forces are fully capable, he added.

Harvey's third priority is transforming the Army. He said this is done in two parts-the way the Army fights and the way it does business.

Although there has been a lot of progress made in modularity, force stabilization, and rebalancing the force, Harvey said there is still a lot to do on the business side.

"I think we're just beginning that [business transformation]," he said. "There's been a lot of good thought given. Now we've got to get action-ask the tough questions-If you have some type of repair operation, what is world-class performance? Where are you relative to that world-class performance? Where's your plan to get you to world-class performance? We have to start asking the tough questions in the business side."

Harvey said this is very important because it can free resources up for modularity, for example.

"If we can get the resources from the business side, we can accelerate modularity-a detailed plan-but this just helps us do it quicker, and to develop this more capable force," he said. It also gives the secretary more flexibility for other priorities.

"If we can drive down the cost of our business operations, that gives me more flexibility and if there are shortfalls in the future, then I can have that flexibility for quality of life-I can now apply it to those higher priorities, the people priorities," Harvey said.

The secretary's priorities also include developing leaders for today and tomorrow, executing major acquisition programs and what he calls partnerships and relationships.

"It starts with, like they say around here, a no-daylight relationship with the chief," Harvey said. It also includes a very productive relationship with the secretary of Defense and his staff, productive relationships with Congress, with industry and the retired community, he added.

Harvey said his seven priorities are a comprehensive set to guide his actions and give his focus, but not without some challenges.

The two major challenges are to win the global war on terrorism and secondly, "while we are doing that," he said, "to transform the Army in a way which will make us a more capable organization in the future, both from a war-fighting perspective and the business perspective."

Harvey has extensive business experience, having worked more than 30 years with corporations doing business with the federal government on programs from undersea to outer space.

He said he has been involved in various phases of 20 to 25 major acquisition programs across the entire spectrum of DoD systems-from submarines to tanks to fighter aircraft to helicopters to outer space.

He was also a White House Fellow in the Department of Defense in the late 1970s, on the Army Science Board from 1998 to 2001 and was involved in the initial studies that led up to what's today called the Future Combat Systems Program.

Whether it's managing a large organization or deploying and developing systems and technology, Harvey said he has developed a management philosophy over the years: people are the single most important part of any organization.

"The Army is a people organization and I'm very comfortable leading and managing and changing a people organization," he said. I've done it basically all my corporate career."

Harvey said he is and will continue fighting for the Soldiers as they continue the battle on GWOT.

"They can rest assure that I'll be back here-getting the resources that are needed for quality of life for themselves and their families, their well-being," Harvey said, "and to ensure that they have the right equipment, the right training to provide the force protection, to provide the lethality they need-that is so important to the future of our country as well as the rest of the world."